

Spring 1-15-2000

ENG 1001C-010: Composition and Language

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Syllabus: English 1001-010

Composition & Language

Michael Kuo

MWF, 2:00 - 2:50



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General Information

Course Description: A course in the reading and writing of expressive, expository, and persuasive essays. Attention is given to effective expression, clear structure, adequate development, and documentation of sources. Prerequisite: English 1000 or proficiency in basic skills as determined by the English Department.

Some of My Teaching Philosophy:

I am not Mr. Holland. I love teaching, but the three things I like best about it are: June, July, and August. I am not particularly good at being a motivator; I will not spend much effort trying to get you excited about writing papers, and I will not be calling you or your parents at home to make sure you're on the ball, like some high school teachers do. That said, I LOVE working with students who want help, with their writing or anything else. If you seek my help, you will get it—as much as you want.

As far as teaching writing is concerned, I don't believe that teaching "grammar" is going to help most people become better writers. Neither is doing sentence combining exercises and so on. And while it is obvious that reading a lot makes one a better writer, I don't think that reading essays from an anthology and discussing their writing strategies for boring hours on end is going to help many people, either. You will spend most of your class time WRITING, getting help from me and from the others in the class—and you will be expected to read others' writings and help them.

I have my own opinions about the computer technology conquering our world: I don't like it much. It's (probably) hopelessly tied up with commercialism, with the corporate take-over of our values, and with the way the rich mistreat the poor. I will share these opinions with you this semester, you may even study and write about these ideas. But that doesn't mean I have any right whatsoever to withhold your access to this technology. We all know that, when you graduate and seek a "real-world" job, it can only help you to be able to say "I can make Web pages" or "Yes, I have lots of experience using computers." My goal is to help you become the best writer you can be in the computer environment you're headed for—and at the same time, to get you to think about the social justice problems of such an environment.

The "rules" of written English change as people change them, and I do not see myself as the Guardian of My Generation's Standards. The third sentence of the preceding paragraph, for example, contains a punctuation error, a "comma splice," according to stodgy English teacher types. I "should" have used a semicolon, or inserted "and," or made two sentences. But this kind of comma splice has become

common practice throughout what we read (so has beginning a sentence with the word "But," another error if you ask a real traditionalist). Another example: "Anyone can get their oil changed for free today." And one more: "I go to the park everyday." If you can convince me that something I've taken exception to is common practice in written American English (and I don't mean "common practice among all the people on my dorm floor, none of whom is getting above a C in English"), you will not only see my objection disappear; you will have taught me something I need to know. There is a hitch, however. Considering AUDIENCE is probably the most important element of writing (the other elements all stem from this one), and while your audience for this class is me, your classmates, and anyone who uses the Internet, your audience for most collegiate writing is just stodgy teachers. Therefore I will expect you to understand what a comma splice is, for example, or why "their" is not appropriate in much academic writing.

Books & Materials

A Pocket Style Manual

5 new 3 1/2 computer disks, formatted, for IBM-compatible PC's.

Policies

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is required. I will reduce your course grade if attendance becomes a problem, on the following scale: three unexcused absences — one letter grade; five unexcused absences — two letter grades; more than six unexcused absences—no credit. Participation affects several of your assignment grades; please see "Assignments" for details.

Late Work

I will not accept late work, unless we have made a previous arrangement.

Plagiarism

I won't tolerate plagiarism.

Pornographic Images

Any idiot who pops up dirty pictures on the screen in our classroom gets an F for the course. Not fair? Too strict? Not within my prerogatives? I'll let you process the grade appeal. In the meantime, my tolerance for sexual harassment is zero.

Games, Surfing, and So on

I will expect you to use class time for working on assignments or, if we're discussing something, for paying attention and taking notes. If you're not able to handle this, I will ask you to leave. If the problem persists, I'll reduce your grade.

Internet Browsing & E-Mail Skills

I will not teach you, in class, how to use e-mail or how to browse the Internet with Netscape or Internet

Explorer. However, you are required to master these skills! If it is all new to you, ask for help.

Papers in HTML

All written assignments must be produced in Hypertext Mark-Up Language (HTML), as Web pages. Don't worry; it's easy—easier than, say, Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. Printing will not be allowed in class without my permission. This is a writing course, not a Web page design course. Your grade will not suffer if you never figure out how to make a Web page or do any of the other computer stuff we learn. I will, however, not accept your work in printed format until I am satisfied that you have given making Web pages and so on the old college try, seeking help from others and from me.

Public Writing

Almost all of the writing you do for this course will be public. It will be published where I, your classmates, your parents, your ex-boyfriend, and anyone using the Internet can read it. My experience teaching writing leads me to believe that having such a public audience substantially helps learning writers. If you think having a real-world audience for your writing may be a problem for you, please contact me **VERY, VERY EARLY IN THE SEMESTER so that one of the following can happen: 1) We talk and I convince you to go through with it; 2) We work out arrangements by which you can avoid having a public audience for your writing; or 3) I help you navigate our department's processes so that you can switch to another section.**

Computer Access

Computer access is, of course, a huge social justice issue. But it isn't an issue for you in terms of getting your work done for this course. If you think it is, please see me very early in the semester and I will convince you that it isn't—or you will convince me that it is (which has happened once in the past five years).

Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on the 100 points below; A: 90-100, B: 80-89, C: 70-79, NC: less than 70.

- Homepage (10 points)
- Register Homepage with Altavista (2.5 points)
- Annotated Links Page or CIA Conspiracy Memo (10 points)
- College Portfolio Essay (15 points)
- Register CPE with Altavista and Another Major Search Engine (2.5 points)
- Group Research Project: Research (10 points) and Written Contribution (15 points)
- Revision of College Portfolio Essay (10 points)
- BS Basket (25 points)

Please follow the links under "assignments" for detailed information about each graded item.

Grading of Written Material

I will follow the grading standards suggested by Eastern's English Department, which you can find under "Tutorials." You will notice that the various categories are pretty explicitly detailed, but that the way a teacher weighs each category is left up for grabs. Here is how I will approach weighing the categories:

I will ignore the "Process" category for your Homepage and your Annotated Links / CIA Conspiracy Memo assignments.

I will ignore the "Focus/Meeting the Assignment" grade for all written assignments. Meeting the assignment, it seems to me, is not something to grade; either 1) you did the assignment, 2) you didn't, or 3) you didn't understand the assignment (or I didn't communicate clearly) and did something else. The only one of these that's worth discussing is #3; in this case we will need to talk, and you will need to create something that becomes a #1. As far as "Focus" is concerned, it is clearly very important to your writing—but belongs under "Organization" and "Development." Your paper's ability to focus (rather than ramble aimlessly, for example) will be graded under the other categories.

I will weigh "Organization," "Style / Awareness of Audience," and "Development" more heavily than "Mechanics." This is not to say I will not weigh mechanics at all (see the next paragraph!). This also doesn't mean you won't have to work on mechanics this semester (see "BS Basket," above).

A "C," "D," or "F" in any of the individual categories will conquer the grade for the entire paper; for example, if you have a "C" for mechanics, your paper will get a "C," no matter how good its organization, development, and so on.

Determining Your Grade

I am using *Grade Assistant 99*, a software program I've developed, for class management (you're using it now). You can see all the grades you have received so far by entering your student ID number and your PIN after clicking on the appropriate course. Your grades cannot be accessed by anyone except me and you, unless you give your PIN to someone else.

Note: Writing will be graded on the basis of the EIU English Department Standards.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please notify me and contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.